

## On The Manuscript Copies Of “Al Kashshof” By Makhmud Zamakhshari

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There are so many interpretations in the world,  
But there is no such thing as al-Kashshof.  
If you are looking for guidance, read al-Kashshof again,  
If ignorance is a disease, al-Kashshof is a cure for it  
[Uvatov, 1992]

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**Abstract.** This article discusses one of the famous religious works named “Kashshof”, in particular, its manuscript copies (full name - “al-Kashshof fi haqiqi ghavomidi-t-tanzil va uyuni-l -aqovil fi vujuhi-t-ta’vil”) (“The one that opens the eyes of narrations by interpreting the hidden truths of the Qur’an”) of the great Chorasmian scholar Abul Qasim Mahmud Zamakhshari dedicated to the interpretation of the Holy Quran. Today, fourteen manuscripts of this tafseer (a commentary to the Holy Quran) are kept in the manuscript fund of the Institute of Oriental Studies named after Abu Rayhan Beruni of the Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan. The article analyzes these fourteen manuscripts in detail from the point of view of source studies. The complete bibliographic index of each manuscript is recorded. The manuscripts also contain detailed information about the surahs (chapters in Quran) - how many verses, where they were revealed, how the surah interpretations were given, and the calligraphy of the manuscripts. At the end of the article, photos from the manuscripts of “Kashshof” are attached to give an idea of the manuscripts.

**Key words:** Khorezm scholar, Mahmud Zamakhshari, commentator, Kashshof, commentary, Holy Quran, manuscript, source analysis, bibliographic index.

**Introduction.** Mahmud Zamakhshari, a scholar known not only in the East but also around the world for his intelligence and rich scientific heritage, authored many religious works including one of the most famous and widely distributed works in the world, commentary on the Holy Qur’an, “**al-Kashshof fi haqiqi ghavomidi-t-tanzil va uyuni-l-aqovil fi vujuhi-t-ta’vil**”(“**The one that opens the eyes of narrations by interpreting the hidden truths of the Qur’an**”). This work is widely referred to as “**Kashshof**” with a relatively short name. The work is considered unique among other tafseer because of its philological analysis to the Holy Qur’an.

Based on the conclusions of scholars who studied the heritage of Zamakhshari, it should be noted that the Khorezmian scholar has always been one of the three most powerful mufasseers (a commentator on Qur’an) in the world (Tabari (839 - 923), **Zamakhshari (1075 - 1144)**, Baydavi (died 1286). Zamakhshari's greatness as a mufaseer was that he was perfect in the fifteen sciences required to interpret the Qur’an. These sciences are Arabic lexicology, its grammar, morphology, etymology, phonology, phonetics, stylistics, the science of recitation, the science of religion, the science of use of Islamic jurisprudence, the science of why the verses were revealed, the reason of verses in the Holy Quran being repeated, Islamic jurisprudence, the science of hadith, the divinely inspired knowledge of Islam. A renowned Iraqi historian Ibn Khallikon testified in his work “Vafoyotu-l-a’yon va anbo’ abno’i-z-zamon” that Zamakhshari was good at these sciences [Ibn Khallikon 1881, 107]. Indeed, Zamakhshari managed to reveal how beautiful the language of the Holy Quran is, in addition, the mufaseer once more proved through his work “Kashshof” that the Holy Quran is a divine wonder. The English Orient learner H. A. Gibb in his work “Arabic Literature” notes: “Zamakhshari, in the first place,

was famous for his tafseer. His work has been published again and again despite it was written many centuries ago and it has not lost its significance even today” [Gibb 1960, 85-86]. A number of factors including many commentaries and descriptions written for the tafseer “Kashshof”, the translations of this work to many foreign languages, the fact that it has been published in a number of countries truly show how great the work is. According to the book “The History of Arabic literature” by German Orient learner Karl Brokkelman there are nearly a hundred manuscript copies of “Kashshof” at the largest funds and libraries of such cities as London, Manchester, Berlin, Munich, Hamburg, Leipzig, Milan, Saint Petersburg, Peshawar, Calcutta, Raipur, Istanbul, Tunis, Cairo. Also, Mahmud ibn Mas'ud al-Shirazi (d. 1310), Husayn ibn Muhammad Tayibiy (d. 1342), Muhammad Taftazani (d. 1389), and Jurjani (d. 1413) the prominent figures, leading scholars and researchers of their time, wrote more than twenty commentaries on Zamakhshari's tafseer which are now widespread throughout the world [Brockelman 1868, 507 - 509]. The original manuscript of the work “Kashshof” (1134) is now in the library of Tehran [Akilov 1982, 57].

**Main part.** The Manuscripts Fund of the Institute of Oriental Studies named after Abu Rayhan Beruni of the Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan stores 14 manuscripts of the work “Kashshof”. But none of them are complete versions. Some of them give the first part of the work, some the second or third part. Others contain different parts of a work in one volume. The following is a description of the 14 manuscripts available in the fund.

The first manuscript of "Kashshof" in the fund is the copy that is being stored under the inventory number of 1909. This manuscript is a copy of a work written in Mecca in 528 A.H. 1134 A.D., and was copied by Muhammad ibn Muhammad al-Kozruni in 837 A.H. 1433 A.D. in suls scripts. Written in Arabic, the manuscript consists of 762 pages (1524 pages) and measures 18x26 cm. The number of lines on each page is 29. Each page of the manuscript gives citation from the previous page. The cardboard covered manuscript needs repairing. The manuscript has been submerged and defective. Most of the text have faded from certain pages, and there are a lot of places where the text of one page falls on the second page. Many pages were torn, but as the text of the work was given in the table in the middle of the page, it was not damaged, only the text on the last pages 761 and 762 became unreadable. It is exactly on page 761 that the tafseer on Surat al-Falaq begins, and the tafseer is not complete because the last pages of the manuscript are defective. The manuscript does not have a title page, it begins with an introduction. The introduction is written in a small suls scripts with ornaments and it is taken from the embroidered table. You can see miniature art on these pages. After a short introduction, the tafseer of Surat al-Fatiha begins. The text on each page is given in a table. The verses being interpreted are written in gold ink, and its interpretation is written in black ink. However, the verses written in gold ink have faded from most pages. Some pages of the manuscript bear the seal of the author of the manuscript copy. The pages of the manuscript are not numbered, and the order of the pages can be determined by means of citations from previous pages. The manuscript gives the tafseers to the surahs from Surat al-Fatihah to Surat al-Falaq, but the interpretation of Surat al-Falaq is not complete, as the last pages are flawed.

Another manuscript of the work is a copy kept under inventory number 6048, measuring 17.5x25.5 cm, 82 sheets (164 pages). It is a compilation of two different parts of “Kashshof”. The first manuscript of the work in the volume is written in black ink in suls scripts. The text is placed on 19 lines on each page, it is not vowelled. The text of the tafseer does not highlight between surahs and verses, they are given in the same scripts, in the same ink, in the same size as the text of the tafseer. This makes it difficult for the reader to find the meaning of the surah. The text is not tabulated. There are no comments at the edges of the page. Pages are not numbered. The sequence of pages can be determined using citations referring to the previous page. In this part of the volume, there are a total of 18 suras from Surat al-Fatihah to Surat al-Kahf with their tafseer (Fatiha, Baqara, Ali Imran, Nisa, Maida, An'am, A'raf, Anfal, Tawba, Yunus, Hud, Yusuf, Ra'd , Ibrahim, Hijr, Nahl, Isra, Kahf). Another part of the work included in this volume has a volume of 254 sheets (508 pages). In this manuscript, the text of the work is arranged in 19 lines on each page. The text is in Naskh script, it is fully vowelled. The text of the work is not tabulated, but there are many comments in the margins. They are written in naskh, rika, nasta'liq scripts. The sheer number of comments and commentaries means that this part of the work was widely read. On some pages, comments and explanations can also be found between lines of text. The manuscript has citations from the previous page, but some torn pages are missing. The manuscript describes a total of 9 suras (Surah Yunus, Hud, Yusuf, Ra'd, Ibrahim, Hijr, Nahl, Isra, Kahf) from Surah Yunus to Surat al-Kahf. The names of the surahs, the number of verses in them, and the place where the verses were revealed are

given by the copyist in slightly larger letters in red ink to distinguish them from the text of the commentary. It is unknown when and by whom both parts of this work were copied.

Another manuscript of “Kashshof”, kept under inventory number **7946**, is 478 sheets (956 pages) in size, 16x27 cm, with 21 lines per page. The text of the work is written in small suls scripts, the text is not vowelled. The names of the surahs, the number of verses in them, and the names of the places where they were revealed were given in red ink by the copyist to distinguish them from the text of the tafseer. The text of the work is not tabulated. There are no comments to the text in the margins. The manuscript was copied by Hafiz Salih in 1059 AH / 1649 AD. This manuscript starts with an excerpt from Surah Maryam. It contains the tafseer for a total of 97 suras, from Surah Maryam to Surah Nas.

The manuscript, stored under inventory number **6043**, has a volume of 415 sheets (830 pages), size 17x26.5 cm; the number of lines on the page is 27. The text of the work is written in small naskh script, the text is not vowelled. The work does not have a title page. The manuscript begins with an introduction. The introduction is given in an embroidered table. The tafseer of the suras after the introduction is not tabulated. The text of the tafseer is given in black ink, the names of the surahs, where they were revealed, and the numbers of verses are highlighted in red ink. The margins has comments and expanations in red and black ink. A number of pages of the manuscript bear the seal of the author of the manuscript. Each sheet has citation from the previous page. The last page of the manuscript (p. 830) states that this copy was copied by Abdurrahman ibn Abu Bakr in 823 AH / 1420 AD. This manuscript contains the first part of the work, which begins with Surat al-Fatiha. It contains the tafseer for a total of 15 surahs (Surat al-Fatihah, Surat al-Hijr) interpreted.

The manuscript of “Kashshof”, which is kept under inventory number **7949**, is a continuation of the inventory numbered 6043 in the fund. The manuscript is 516 sheets (1032 pages) in size, 17x26.5 cm, with 27 lines per page.

The text of the work is written in small naskh script, the text is not vowelled. The work does not have a title page. The manuscript begins with a continuation of the tafseer of Surat al-Isra, meaning that the first pages of the manuscript do not have a beginning of the tafseer for the Surat al-Isra. The next surah, that is, from Surat al-Kahf to Surat an-Nas, contains a complete tafseer of all the suras. The tafseer of the suras is not tabulated. The text of the tafseer is given in black ink, the names of the surahs, where they were revealed, and the numbers of verses are highlighted in red ink. The margins contain comments in naskh, suls, and nasta'liq scripts in red and black ink. A number of pages of the manuscript bear the seal of the author of the manuscript. Each sheet has citation from the previous page. The last page of the manuscript (p. 1032) states that this copy was copied by Abdurrahman ibn Abu Bakr in 823 AH / 1420 AD.

Another manuscript of “Kashshof” is kept under inventory number **2423**. The copy is 237 sheets (474 pages), measuring 13.5x24 cm, the number of lines on the page is 31. The manuscript was submerged, many pages were damaged, and ink was scattered in many parts of the text, making some sentences unreadable. In addition, on some pages, the part of the text written in red ink is very blurred and unreadable. Although the manuscript has been repaired several times, it still has some parts which need repairing. The pages of the manuscript are numbered, to the left of the top of each page. The pages do not have citation from the previous page. The text of the work is written in small suls script, due to the nature of this type of script, most letters are given without dots, the text is not vowelled. The work does not have a title page. The manuscript begins with the tafseer on Surah Maryam. At the beginning of the tafseer there is an embossed tablet with the words "Bismillahi-r-rahmani-r-rahim". This manuscript contains surahs from Surah Maryam to Surah Nas. The tafseer of the suras is not tabulated. The text of the tafsir is given in black ink, the names of the surahs are written in slightly larger letters to distinguish them from the text of the tafseer, and the verses of the surah are highlighted in red ink. The margin contains comments in black ink in naskh, suls and nasta'liq scripts. The manuscript was copied in 759 AH by Ahmad ibn Mahmud Shashi.

The manuscript, stored under inventory number **11583**, has a volume of 318 sheets (636 pages), measuring 18x26 cm, the number of lines on the page is 25. Although the manuscript has been revised several times, it is still in good condition. The seals on the manuscript pages were removed one by one, resulting in perforated pages, some of which were repaired and some of which were not. The manuscript pages are unnumbered, they do not have citation from the previous page. The text of the work is written in naskh script, the text is vowelled. The work does not have a title page. The manuscript begins with a continuation of the tafseer for Surat al-Isra, meaning that the first pages of the manuscript do not have a beginning with the tafseer

of Surat al-Isra. The next surah, that is, from Surat al-Toha to Surat an-Nas, has a complete tafseer. The interpretation of the suras is not tabulated. The text of the tafsir is given in black ink, the names of the suras and the print at the beginning of the sura are written in larger letters and separated from the text of the tafseer. Some pages have comments in the margins in nasta'liq script. The manuscript was copied in 728 AH by Ilyos Ansari ibn Qudsi.

The manuscript of "Kashshof", kept under inventory number **2902**, has a volume of 257 sheets (514 pages), sized 14.5x22 cm, the number of lines on the page is 17. Although the manuscript has been repaired several times, it still needs repairing at some parts. The text of the work is written in large naskh scripts, the text is vowelled. The work does not have a title page. The manuscript begins with an introduction. After the introduction, the interpretation of Surat al-Fatiha began. The manuscript interprets Surahs Al-Fatihah, Al-Baqarah and Al-Imran. The text of the tafseer is given in black ink, the names of the suras and the verses are highlighted in red ink. The interpretation of the suras is not tabulated. The margins have randomly written comments and commentaries in red and black ink. Each sheet has citation from the previous one. At the end of the last page, on page 257a of the manuscript, it is stated that this copy was copied by Abdullah ibn Umar ibn Abdulaziz in 745 AH.

The manuscript, kept under inventory number **2403**, has a volume of 334 sheets (668 pages), sized 17x28 cm, the number of lines on the page is 27. There are a lot of pages in the manuscript that have been damaged by water. Although the copy has been repaired several times, it still requires some repairs. The text of the work is written in small suls, due to the nature of this type of script, most letters are given without dots, the text is not vowelled. The work does not have a title page. The manuscript begins with an introduction. The manuscript has tafseer for a total of eight surahs from Surat al-Fatihah to Surat al-Anfal (Surat al-Fatihah, Al-Baqarah, Ali Imran, Nisa, Maidah, An'am, A'raf, Anfal). The text of the tafseer is given in black ink, and the names of the suras are highlighted in red ink. Unlike other copies of "Kashshof", this manuscript does not indicate where the suras were revealed or the number of verses in them. The interpretation of the suras is not tabulated. The margin contains random comments and commentaries in naskh, nasta'liq and rika scripts. On some pages, comments can also be found between lines of text. The pages of the manuscript are not numbered, and the pages do not have citations from the previous pages either. The year when and by whom the manuscript was copied is unknown.

The manuscript of "Kashshof", kept under inventory number **4464**, has 197 sheets (394 pages), 16x24 cm in size, 23 lines per page. The manuscript has not been repaired, there are many parts for repairing, and the pages have been got out of place. Given the fact that the sheets are not numbered, and there are no citations from the previous pages on them, there is a possibility that the sequence of sheets might be distorted. A number of pages of the manuscript have been punctured, resulting in missing comments in the margins. The text of the work is written in large naskh script, the text is vowelled. The work does not have a title page. The interpretation of the surahs is not tabulated. The text of the commentary is given in black ink, the names of the surahs, the names of the places where they were revealed, the number of verses in them, and the print at the beginning of the surah are written in red ink in larger letters and separated from the text of the tafseer. In the margins of the pages of the manuscript you can see the comments and commentaries on the Nasta'liq, Naskh and Rika scripts. The manuscript was copied by Kavomiddin Itkani in 717 AH / 1317 AD.

The manuscript, stored under inventory number **4458**, has a volume of 259 sheets (518 pages), sized 18x28 cm, the number of lines on the page is 27. The manuscript contains waterlogged and defective pages. On some pages, the text is scattered in a certain part of the text. The copy has been repaired several times. The text of the work is written in naskh script, the text is vowelled. The work does not have a title page. The manuscript begins with an introduction. The manuscript contains tafseer for 6 surahs (Fatiha, Baqara, Ali Imran, Nisa, Maida and An'am). The text of the tafseer is given in black ink, the names of the surahs, where they were revealed, and the number of verses in them are given in slightly larger letters to distinguish them from the text of the tafseer. The interpretation of the surahs is not tabulated. The margins contain comments in black and red ink on the naskh and nasta'liq scripts. Comments and commentaries in red ink on some pages have become dull and unreadable. The pages of the manuscript are not numbered, and the pages do not have citations from the previous page either. The manuscript was copied in 794 AH by Muhammad ibn Abu Mufahir.

The manuscript, stored under inventory number **3427**, has a volume of 86 sheets (172 pages). The manuscript is large, 31x38.5 cm, with 41 lines per page. The manuscript contains waterlogged and defective

pages. On some pages, the text is scattered in a certain part of the text. Most of the comments and commentaries in the margins have also been faded. The copy has been repaired several times. The text of the work is written in suls script, the text is vowelled. The work does not have a title page. The manuscript begins with an introduction. The introduction is given in a table with a plate at the beginning. The manuscript contains tafseer for 6 surahs (Fatiha, Baqara, Ali Imran, Nisa, Maida and An'am). The text of the tafseer is given in black ink, and the names of the surahs, where they were revealed, and the number of verses in them are given in red ink to distinguish them from the text of the tafseer. The text of the tafseer is tabulated on each page, and in the margins there are comments and explanations in black ink in the naskh, suls and nasta'liq scripts. The pages of the manuscript are not numbered, and the pages do not have citation from the previous page either. The year when and by whom the manuscript was copied is unknown.

Another manuscript of “Kashshof” is kept under inventory number **6421**. The pages of the manuscript are numbered. Numbers are placed on the left side of the top of each page. The manuscript has no beginning. The first page is numbered 159a. This is the clear indication of missing part. From this page begins the tafseer of verse 77 of Surah Hud. The end of the manuscript does not exist either. There is no end to the tafseer of Surat al-Muzammil, which begins on page 239a. Half of the last page, page 242 of the manuscript (actually 401 pages according to the numbers on the manuscript) were torn. This copy of "Kashshof" tafseer contains a total of 12 Surahs, from Surah Hud to Surah Muzammil. The manuscript consists of a total of 242 sheets (484 pages), its size is 24x32.5 cm, the number of lines on the page is 41. Although the manuscript has been repaired several times, it still has some parts which needs repairing. Most pages have water stains. However, this did not affect the text of the tafseer. The text of the tafseer is easy to read. The text of the tafseer is written in Naskh script, the text is not vowelled. To distinguish the names of the surahs, the number of verses in them, and the names of the places where they were revealed were given in larger letters in red ink compared to the text of the commentary. The text of the work is not tabulated. Some pages have comments in the margins. Since the manuscript does not have a title page and ending, it is not possible to determine who copied it and the year of copying.

Another manuscript of the work, kept under inventory number **6450**, is 293 sheets (586 pages) in size, 29x18.5 cm. This volume contains a collection of two different manuscripts of "Kashshof". The pages of the manuscript are not numbered, but each page has citation from the previous page. When the manuscript was repaired, numbers were written in pencil on the upper left side of the pages. In the volume, from page 1b to page 61b contains a copy of the "Kashshof" in nasta'liq scripts. It contains the introductory part of the work and the tafseer of Surat al-Fatiha and Surat al-Baqara. The introductory part of the work and the tafseer on the first surahs of Surat al-Fatiha are commented on. The names of the suras are not separated from the text of the tafseer. The number of lines on each page is 19. Beginning on page 62a of this volume, another part of the manuscript of Kashshof, written in Naskh script, begins. This part of the work is 231 (62-293) sheets. It contains the first part of the tafseer on Surat al-A'raf. There is no beginning to the interpretation of this surah. The interpretation of Surat al-Anfal begins on page 97a. In this manuscript, the names of the surahs, their places of revelation, and the number of verses in them are highlighted in red ink. The last surah to be interpreted in this manuscript is Surat al-Kahf, which begins on page 279b. But there is no end to the tafseer of this surah. So, in this part of the work "Kashshof" there is tafseer for a total of 11 surahs. The manuscript has 25 lines per page. The text of the work is not vowelled. There are no comments, except for some pages. The manuscript contains waterlogged and defective pages. On some pages, the text is scattered in a certain part of the text.

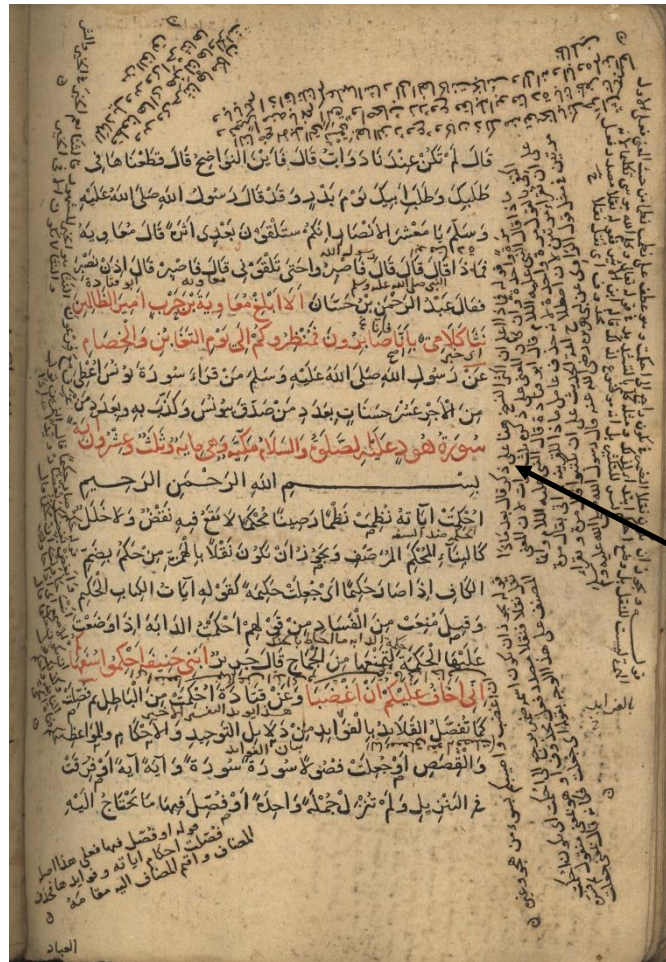
For a more detailed bibliographic information on the 14 manuscripts available in the Manuscripts Fund of the Abu Rayhan Beruni Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan, please refer to the table below.

**Table 1. The brief bibliographic indexes of manuscripts of "Kashshof" stored in the manuscript fund of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan**

№	Inventory number	The year of the manuscript to be copied	The name of the calligrapher	The number of sheets	The size of the manuscript (in cm)
1.	1909	837/1433	Muhammad Kozruniy	762	18x26
2.	6048	Not available	Not available	336	17,5x25,5

3.	7946	1059/1649	Hofiz Solih	478	16x27
4.	6043	823/1420	Abdurahmon ibn Abu Bakr	415	17x26,5
5.	7949	823/1420	Abdurahmon ibn Abu Bakr	516	17x26,5
6.	2423	759/1358	Ahmad ibn Mahmud Shoshiy	237	13,5x24
7.	11583	728/1328	Ilyos Ansoriy ibn Qudsiy	318	18x26
8.	2902	745/1344	Abdulloh ibn Umar ibn Abdulaziz	257	14,5x22
9.	2403	Not available	Not available	334	17x28
10.	4464	717/1317	Qavomiddin Itqoniy	197	16x24
11.	4458	794/1392	Muhammad ibn Abu Mufaxir	259	18x28
12.	3427	Not available	Not available	86	31x38,5
13.	6421	Not available	Not available	242	24x32,5
14.	6450	Not available	Not available	293	29x18,5

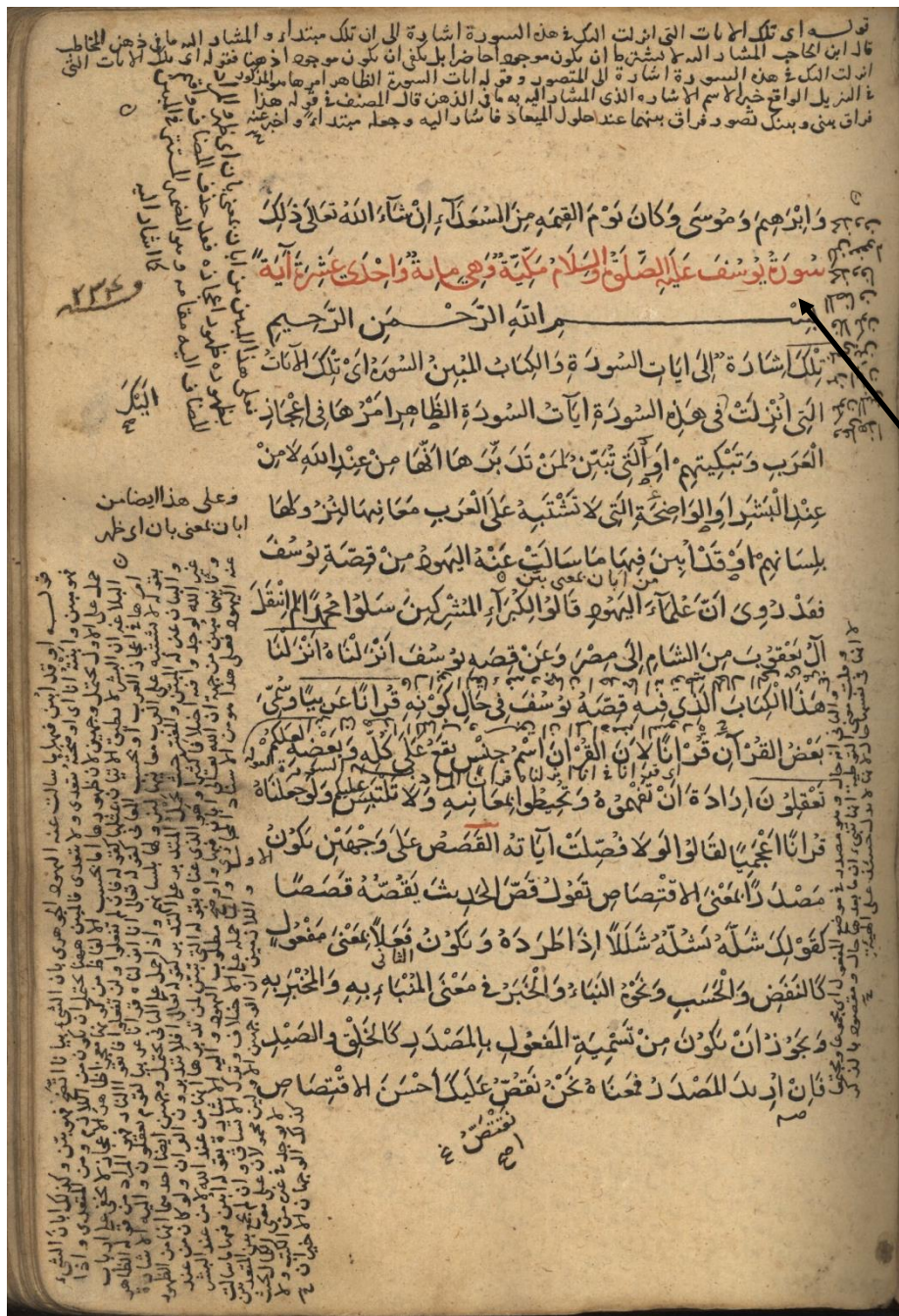
**Photos from the manuscript copies of Mahmud Zamakhshari's "Kashshof" in the Manuscripts Fund of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan**



**Photo 1.** Page 112B of the manuscript copy of "Kashshof" kept under inventory number 6048. In order to distinguish the names of the surahs from the text of the tafseer, the number of verses in them, and the place where the verses were revealed are given by the copyist in slightly larger letters in red ink as follows: **Surah Hud, revealed in Makkah, consists of 123 verses.**

سورة هود عليه الصلوة و السلام مكية  
و هي مائة و ثلاث و عشرون آية



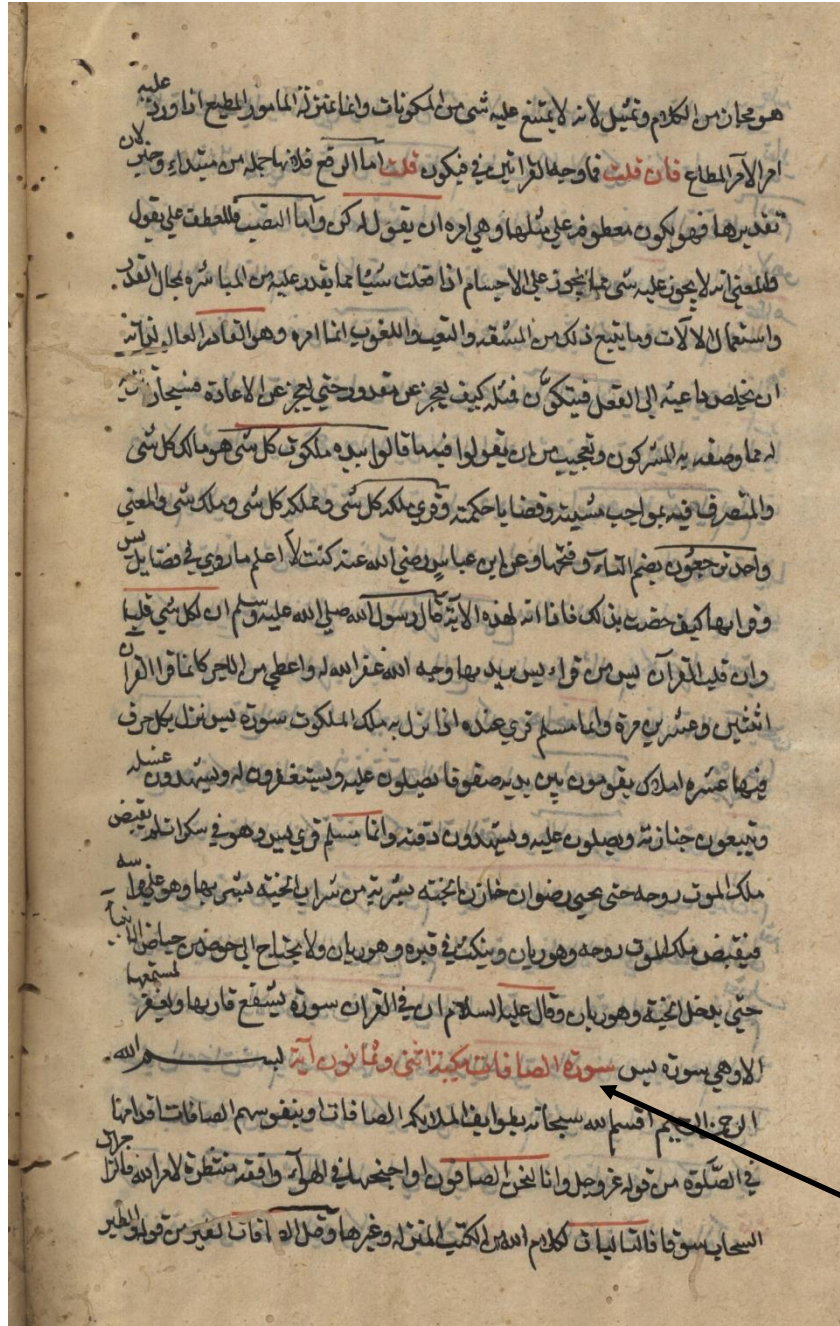


**Photo 2.** Page 149A of the manuscript copy of "Kashshof", kept under inventory number 6048. In this page, too, the names of the surahs, the number of verses in them, and the place where the verses were revealed are highlighted by the copyist in a slightly larger letter in red ink from the text of the tafseer: **Surah Yusuf, revealed in Makkah, consists of 111 verses.**

سورة يوسف عليه الصلوة و السلام مكية

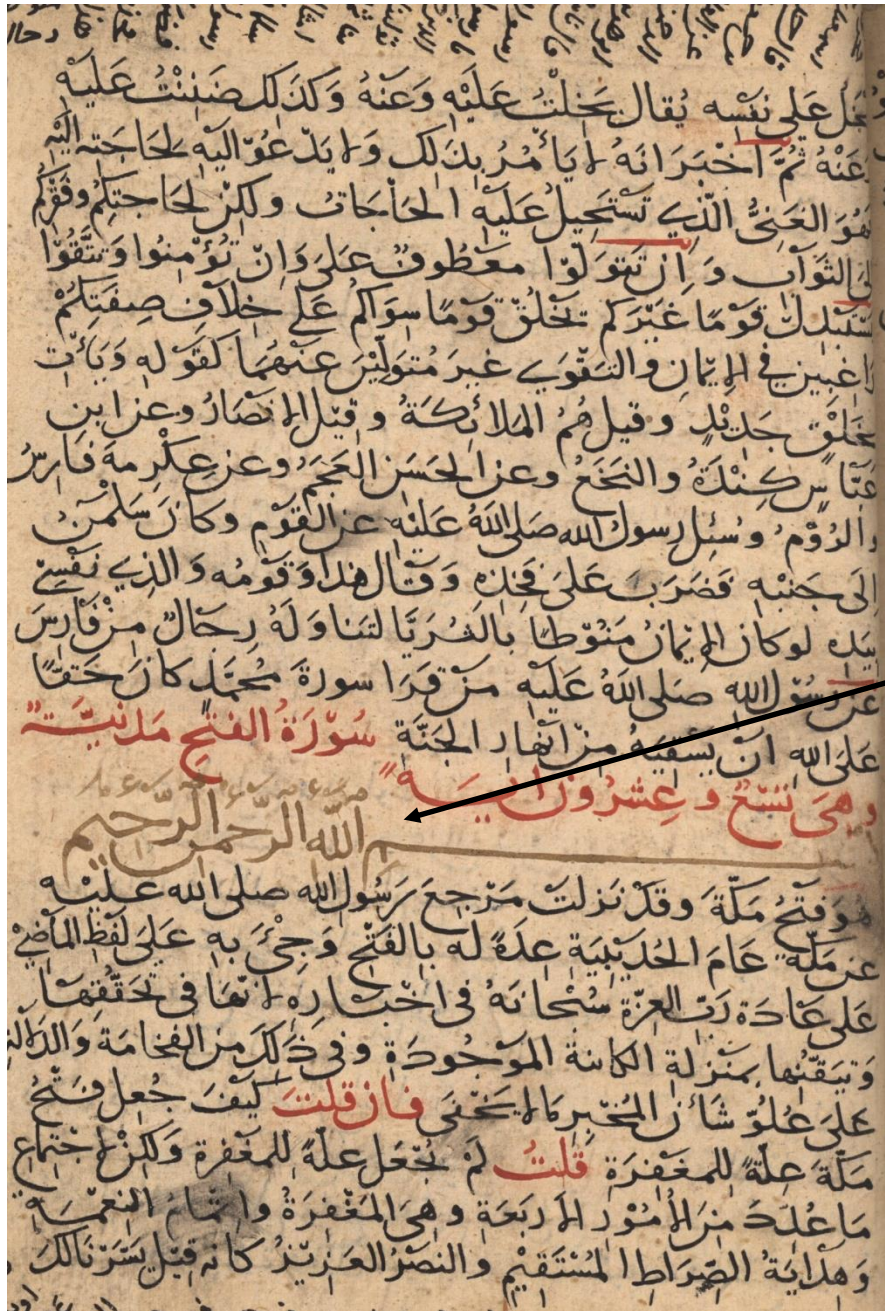
و هي مائة و احدى عشر آية





**Photo 3.** Page 228B of the manuscript copy of "Kashshof" kept under inventory number 7946. This manuscript also contains the names of the surahs, the number of verses in them, and the place where the verses were revealed. But as you can see, there was a mistake made by the copyist. That is, in the following sentence given by the copyist, the word "hundred" is omitted, and as a result, Surat as-Saffat, which consists of 182 verses, is incorrectly given as "82 verses."

سورة الصافات مكية اثني وثمانون آية



**Photo 4.** Page 189A of the manuscript copy of "Kashshof", which is kept under inventory number **4464**. This manuscript also mentions the names of the surahs, the number of verses in them, and the place where the verses were revealed: **Surah Fath, revealed in Madinah, consists of 29 verses.**

سورة الفتح مدنية و هي تسع و عشرون آية

**Conclusion.** All the above-mentioned manuscript copies of "Kashshof", a tafsir on the Qur'an, a major work in the religious heritage of the great scholar Mahmud Zamakhshari, are among the rare works in the manuscript fund of the Institute of Oriental Studies named after Abu Rayhan Beruni of the Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan. All of them, as of today, are suitable for study as an object of scientific research. The study of such works in the scientific heritage of the scholar from the linguistic point of view, from the point of view of source studies is one of the urgent tasks of today.

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